

Russell Petersen, 86

Oct. 16, 1917 - Feb. 14, 2004

HARLAN — Russell Wilbur Petersen was born Oct. 16, 1917, in Elk Horn, to Chris and Anna (Larsen) Petersen. He was baptized in the Elk Horn Lutheran Church. Following the death of his father in 1918, the family moved to Kimballton, where he finished the eighth grade. In 1931, the family moved to Avoca. He was confirmed in the English Lutheran Church and graduated from high school in 1935. He enlisted in the Army Air Force in March, 1942, and was stationed in California, Texas, and Florida as a Link Trainer Instructor. He went to England with the 381st Bomb Group, 8th Air Force, and participated in raids over Germany as a tail gunner on a B-17 bomber. He left the Air Force as a sergeant in 1945. Russell returned to Iowa and farmed near Redline, purchasing a farm in Polk Township, where he fed cattle and farrowed sows. In the mid-1950's he taught Link Training to Air Force pilots in Omaha, NE.



July 29, 1978, Russell married Patricia Gibbons Callahan at St. Michael's Catholic Church in Harlan. After his retirement in 1987, he and Pat traveled extensively in the United States and Canada. They made four trips to Europe and a month's tour of China. Due to poor health, Russell became a resident of the Elm Crest Retirement Community Sept. 29, 2003. He was a longtime Farm Bureau member, serving two terms as president in Shelby County. He was a member of Cornland Marketing and Immanuel Lutheran Church in Harlan. He died Feb. 14, 2004, at Myrtue Memorial Hospital at age 86 years, three months and 29 days.

Russell was preceded in death by his parents; his brother, Melvin Petersen; and sister, Enid Detjens. He is survived by his wife, Patricia Petersen of Harlan; two stepdaughters, Elizabeth (Dennis) Johnson of Marshalltown and Mary Armour of Pleasant Valley; three grandchildren, Michael Armour of Pleasant Valley and Kate Johnson and David Johnson of Colorado; two nephews, Marlin (Margaret) Petersen of Kirkman and Russ (Deb) Detjens of Blair, NE; three nieces, Donna (Ralph) Nelson of Omaha, NE; Shirley (Robert) Greene of Mississippi; and Sandra Garrison of Texas; and other relatives.

Funeral services were held Feb. 17, 2004, at the Immanuel Lutheran Church in Harlan, with Pastor Heather Ploen officiating. Casket bearers were Russ Detjens, Rick Detjens, Dennis Johnson, Ralph Nelson, Ludwig Buman and Craig Olson. Military rites were provided by the Fred Funston A.L. Post #227. Burial was in the Graceland Cemetery in Avoca. Burmeister-Johannsen Funeral Home was in charge of arrangements.